



VENDOR NEWS

Your source for State of Alaska WIC program news related to vendor management. In this newsletter you will find important and useful information affecting vendor agreements with the WIC program. *Enjoy!*

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Page 2

- Fat-Free and 1% Milk
- Training Materials Available

Page 3

- Infant Fruit and Vegetable Containers
- WIC Approved Shelf Labels
- White Potatoes

Page 4

- Vendor Question
- June 2016 Price Survey
- Vendor Management Unit Contact Information

Managers-

Please post this newsletter for your staff to read

eWIC Update

Alaska WIC will begin the transition to electronic benefits in 2017. Fifteen state programs have already fully implemented eWIC. Here are some of the benefits of eWIC that other states have reported:

- ◆ An improved ability to track changes in store inventory for WIC foods
- ◆ Can print reports from the EBT system to show quantities of items sold
- ◆ WIC participants choose to spread purchases over several store visits, so vendors run out of items less frequently
- ◆ WIC participants tend to make more purchases in the store because they buy other items along with their WIC purchases on each store visit
- ◆ WIC participants are buying more fresh produce
- ◆ Fewer cashier errors
- ◆ eWIC takes away the headache of handling paper checks
- ◆ Authorized vendors get paid sooner

New WIC Allowed Food List

WIC clinics will begin distributing the new booklets to participants in July 2016. It will take at least three months for all participants to have the new booklets. Since items that have been removed from the previous booklet may no longer be purchased with WIC checks, it will be important for cashiers to confirm the eligibility of food items at every transaction. As always, please contact the Vendor Management Unit if you have any questions. The food list will also be available online soon at: <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dpa/Pages/nutri/wic/vendors/default.aspx>



Fat-Free and 1% Milk

In October of 2014, the Alaska WIC program reduced the amounts of whole and 2% milk prescriptions as required by the USDA "Final Food Rule" and increased the amount of 1% and fat-free milk appearing on checks. The reduction in whole milk prescriptions for WIC participants is part of USDA's effort to address obesity, about which the U.S. Centers for Disease Control states:

Research has shown that as people become "overweight" and "obese," their risk for developing the following conditions increases:

- Coronary heart disease
- Type 2 diabetes
- Cancers (endometrial, breast, and colon)
- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Dyslipidemia (for example, high total cholesterol or high levels of triglycerides)
- Stroke
- Liver and Gallbladder disease
- Sleep apnea and breathing problems
- Osteoarthritis (a breakdown of cartilage and bone within a joint)

- Gynecological problems (abnormal periods, infertility)

WIC participants must buy the type of milk listed on their checks. For instance, if a check specifies 1% or Fat-free, the participant **may not** purchase 2% or whole milk. A store **may not** offer or allow a substitution of higher fat milk when 1% or Fat-free is listed on the check. WIC participants with questions about their prescribed milk type should be referred back to the clinic that issued the checks.

When a vendor deposits a WIC check in the bank, the store is claiming that food the items listed on the check were sold to the participant. Maintaining sufficient stocks of WIC food items and verifying that the participant's selections correctly match the WIC check and the Allowed Foods List will help your store avoid problems with reimbursements and/or penalties.

Training Materials Available

Do you need help training your store employees on WIC Foods and WIC transactions? Alaska WIC provides the following training tools to simplify this process:

- Check Out Procedures Quick Reference
- Bookkeeper Tips
- Sample WIC checks for training
- Cashier Quiz
- Alaska WIC Allowed Foods List
- Alaska WIC Minimum Stocking Requirements
- Cashier Fruit and Vegetable vouchers training video (online or DVD)
- WIC for Vendors training video (online or DVD)
- Vendor Training PowerPoint presentation (online)
- Vendor Newsletters & Updates (online)

For more information about these tools, please visit the Alaska WIC Vendor Website at: <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dpa/Pages/nutri/wic/vendors/default.aspx>

If you would like to request individualized training or have ideas for additional training resources, contact John King at john.king@alaska.gov or 907-465-6399

Infant Fruit and Vegetable Containers

As a reminder, **one Gerber 2-pack of 4 oz. containers is equal to two 4 oz. jars of baby food.** If a participant has a check for “INFANT FRUIT/VEG-64 OZ” they cannot buy more than 8 Gerber 2-packs. Please note that Gerber 2-packs of 5 oz. containers (3rd Stage Foods) are NOT WIC allowed.



is the same as:



WIC Approved Shelf Labels

Many WIC participants prefer to redeem their WIC vouchers in stores that use our green “WIC Approved” shelf labels to identify WIC allowed foods. The Alaska WIC Program does not require vendors to use shelf labels, but we strongly encourage their use. The simple green labels help participants avoid selecting products or brands that are not WIC approved, and speed the checkout process. Please contact us if you would like some labels for your store.



White Potatoes

White potatoes may be purchased with the Fruit and Vegetable Vouchers (FVVs) in both fresh and frozen. This means that any type of fresh potato (Idaho, fingerling, yellow, purple, etc.) is WIC approved. Frozen is a little more complicated. Frozen potatoes are WIC approved so long as they don't have any added oils, sugars, or fats. **This means products like French fries or tater tots are not WIC approved.** Some hash browns are plain cubed or shredded potatoes with no added oils, fats, or sugars, and those are WIC approved. Preservatives are allowed.

Health and Social Services

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June Price Surveys

Thank you to all who submitted your price surveys by the deadline of June 16. These surveys help us capture fluctuations in costs of goods distributed in Alaska. Your updates help make sure you are properly reimbursed for WIC food sales.

Contacting the WIC Vendor Unit

The Vendor Unit will provide assistance to vendors at any time. For questions or complaints, please contact us and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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Vendor Question

WIC allows “any variety of canned/shelf stable container, or frozen, with no added sugars, syrups, fats, oils, or sodium (salt).” How can I tell if a canned or frozen fruit or vegetable is not allowed?

Answer: Small amounts of sugar are added to some foods that are naturally sugar-containing during the canning process to prevent stress resulting in membrane rupture (i.e. sweet peas). This small amount of added sugar is minimal and helps to maintain the quality and structure of the food. To encourage greater variety in food choices in the WIC food packages, canned vegetables that contain a small amount of sugar for processing purposes, such as plain canned sweet peas and corn, are allowed.

Not Allowed:

- herbs and spices
- creamed vegetables or vegetables with added sauces
- mixed vegetables containing noodles, nuts or sauce packets
- vegetable-grain (pasta or rice) mixtures
- fruit-nut mixtures
- breaded vegetables
- fruits and vegetables for purchase on salad bars
- peanuts or other nuts
- ornamental and decorative fruits and vegetables such as chili peppers on a string; garlic on a string
- gourds; painted pumpkins; fruit baskets and party vegetable trays
- decorative blossoms and flowers
- foods containing fruits such as blueberry muffins and other baked goods.
- home-canned and home-preserved fruits and vegetables.

IF YOU FIND LOST CHECKS: Please notify

your local WIC agency or the State Office immediately at (907) 465-3100 so the checks can be returned to the participant.

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